

Program Summary Department of Education Gifted Education

Program Overview

Administered by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE), the state's Gifted Education program helps public schools provide enhanced learning opportunities for gifted pupils. The stated mission of the program is "to promote the development and implementation of extraordinary education through technical assistance and proper allocation, distribution, and monitoring of state grants so that gifted students reach higher levels of academic achievement, workplace skills and effective participation in society."

A "gifted pupil" is defined in Arizona law (A.R.S. § 15-779) as "a child who is of lawful school age, who due to superior intellect or advanced learning ability, or both, is not afforded an opportunity for otherwise attainable progress and development in regular classroom instruction and who needs special instruction, or special ancillary services, or both, to achieve at levels commensurate with his intellect and ability." A.R.S. § 15-779.02 requires school districts to identify as gifted those students who score at or above the 97th percentile on a nationally-normed standardized test. In addition, school districts and charter schools may identify any number of additional students as being gifted.

The total number of gifted students identified by each school district or charter school does not affect its Gifted Education funding (*see "Program Funding" section below*). All students that it identifies as being gifted, however, must receive instruction that meets requirements specified in A.R.S. § 15-779.02. Those requirements vary by individual district and grade, but generally involve making Gifted Education qualitatively different than regular education. According to ADE guidelines, appropriate modifications must be made to the learning environment, the complexity and organization of content to be mastered, the emphasis on the learning and thinking process, and the quality and variety of the products students create to demonstrate mastery. ADE must approve each school district and charter school's master plan for gifted education to ensure

that the programs meet minimum state requirements (A.R.S. § 15-779.02).

If a school district fails to submit a plan for Gifted Education, or if the Gifted Education plan is not approved by ADE, the school district is not eligible to receive Group A funding for 7% of its entire student count as required by A.R.S. § 15-779.02 (*see "Group A Funding" below*). ADE indicates that this provision has not disqualified any school district or charter school from receiving funding in recent years.

Program Funding

Gifted Education receives funding through the "Group A" weight in the K-12 Basic State Aid formula (A.R.S. § 15-943) and also from a separate Gifted Education program established in A.R.S. § 15-779.03.

Group A Funding

A.R.S. § 15-901 defines Group A as "educational programs for career exploration, a specific learning disability, an emotional disability, mild mental retardation, remedial education, a speech/language impairment, homebound, bilingual, preschool moderate delay, preschool speech/language delay, other health impairments and gifted pupils." Because Group A funding applies to more than Gifted Education, there is no specific Group A funding amount that is required to be allocated to that program.

Gifted Education Funding

The Gifted Support program receives funding from the state General Fund. In FY 2007, the program will receive \$3,380,100 from the General Fund, which is an increase of \$2,009,900 or 147% above FY 2006 (*see Table 1*). The \$2,009,900 increase includes \$2,000,000 to fund changes in the program's funding formula from Laws 2006, Chapter 336. That formula will now provide \$75 per student for 4% of a district or charter's student count or \$2,000 minimum versus \$55 per student for 3% of the student count or \$1,000 minimum previously. The remaining \$9,900 General Fund increase is for Employee Related Expenditures

Table 1				
Gifted Support Program Funding History				
<u>Fund</u>	<u>FY 2001</u>	<u>FY 2005</u>	<u>FY 2006</u>	<u>FY 2007</u>
General Fund	\$1,286,300	\$1,234,800	\$1,370,200	\$3,380,100
Education Donations Fund	0	42,200	42,200	0
Total	\$1,286,300	\$1,277,000	\$1,412,400	\$3,380,100

for the 2 FTE employees who administer the program. The program also received \$42,200 in discretionary funding from the Education Donations Fund in FY 2005, but no program funding from that source is anticipated for FY 2007.

Table 1 displays historical funding information for Gifted Support by fund source, using data from FY 2001, FY 2005, FY 2006, and FY 2007. The total funding amount shown for each year includes approximately \$150,000 and 2 FTE Positions for program administration. All other monies are passed on to school districts and charter schools to help fund Gifted Education.

School district and charter school expenditures for Gifted Support vary based on local need. Common expenditures include teacher salaries, classroom supplies, fees for field trips and special events, and classroom equipment.

As noted above, Laws 2006 Chapter 336 amended the funding formula for the program (A.R.S. § 15-779.03) to provide \$75 per pupil for 4% of the district or charter's student count, or \$2,000, whichever is more. If program funding is insufficient to fully fund this formula, the State Board of Education (SBE) is instructed to reduce allocations based on criteria such as "the utility and demonstrated effectiveness" of programs at individual sites.

In recent years, the department has reduced allocations below formula levels because funding was not increased to accommodate enrollment growth in Gifted Education programs. In doing so, ADE reduced the former \$55 per pupil funding amount by an equal amount for all districts and charter schools, while maintaining the former minimum funding level of \$1,000 per district or charter school (see *Table 2*). In FY 2007, the Gifted Education formula is projected to be fully funded. *Table 2* shows the actual funding level per student for FY 2004 through FY 2006 and the estimated amount for FY 2007:

Table 2	
Gifted Support Program Funding Per District/Pupil	
<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Funding Per Student</u>
FY 2004	\$45.09
FY 2005	\$40.93
FY 2006	\$43.85
FY 2007	\$75.00

School districts and charter schools are not required to apply for Gifted Support funding. In FY 2006, 180 school districts (75.6%), and 5 charter schools (1.4%) applied for Gifted Support funding.

Recent Programmatic Changes

Laws 2006, Chapter 336 (H.B. 2552) made various changes regarding the funding and oversight of Gifted Education programs. As noted above, it increases per student funding for Gifted Education from \$55 for 3% of the district's student count to \$75 for 4% of the district's student count and increases from \$1,000 to \$2,000 the minimum funding per school district or charter school. Chapter 336 also increases from 3% to 7% the amount of Group A weight state aid that shall be withheld from a school district for failing to submit a gifted education program scope and sequence to ADE.

Regarding program oversight, Chapter 336 requires ADE to review the entire scope and sequence for Gifted Education programs at least once every 4 years and approve the entire scope and sequence by July 1 every fifth year unless changes occurred during any of those years. Prior to this change, there were no statutory requirements for ADE to review scope and sequence documents after the initial review. Chapter 336 also creates new monitoring and oversight responsibilities for the Superintendent of Public Instruction, including providing assistance upon request of a school district governing board in the design, implementation and evaluation of Gifted Education programs, encouraging school districts to develop locally innovative programs for gifted pupils, and guaranteeing that all authorized monies expended for Gifted Education programs are in accordance with program requirements. Chapter 336 also requires the SBE to identify pupils eligible to receive Gifted Education program services, and any other guidelines or rules necessary to conduct Gifted Education programs in the state.

Chapter 336 likewise expands program development requirements for school district governing boards and requires that the governing boards submit budget information to ADE that contains program costs, so that ADE can effectively evaluate Gifted Education programs. It also requires Gifted Programs to be provided to pupils as an integral part of the regular school day.

Recent Performance Measures

Table 3 shows performance measures that ADE currently uses to assess the effectiveness of the Gifted Support program. None of these measures appear in the General Appropriation Act.

One of the key performance measures in the table gauges the "Percent of grantees in compliance within Gifted Education." During FY 2005, 88% of grantees were in compliance with Gifted Education program requirements. A grantee is considered out of compliance if ADE has requested changes to its

Gifted Education plan. The department is expecting to have 94% of grantees in compliance in FY 2007. According to the department, this is a result of an increased emphasis on assisting schools in developing Gifted Education programs, which is also displayed in the performance measures for the number of conferences, workshops and trainings held, and the number of school visits on Gifted Education. ADE indicates that it expects each of these performance measures to increase in FY 2007.

The listed measures generally evaluate process-related issues, such as the number of conference, workshops and trainings held, rather than direct impacts of the program on students. ADE should consider developing a performance measure that provides feedback regarding students' perceptions of program value and effectiveness, since they are key stakeholders of the program.

Table 3

Gifted Education Program Performance Measures			
<u>Performance Measure</u>	<u>FY 2004 Actual</u>	<u>FY 2005 Actual</u>	<u>FY 2007 Estimate</u>
Number of conference, workshops and trainings held	10	12	20
Percent of training participants surveyed reporting satisfaction with department training and support	90	95	98
Number of school site visits on Gifted Education	22	30	35
Number of partnerships between Gifted Education and various organizations	N/A	N/A	30
Percent of grantees in compliance within Gifted Education	76	88	94